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ABSTRACT

The practicum reviewed the literature and research on the history, evolution, and current status of women's colleges in the United States with a view toward discovering a viable mission for women's colleges and new marketing and recruiting strategies to support their survival. The findings were analyzed and applied to the prevailing situation at Brenau Women's College in Georgia. The results of the research suggested that, while coeducation was often selected to assure economic survival, this choice generally negated the original purpose of single-sex education and obliterated the leadership and self-esteem building advantages of women's colleges. Those colleges that remained single sex generally found a special market niche and aggressively marketed their women's college advantages. Eight recommendations are made regarding strategic marketing and recruiting at Brenau Women's College, such as recruiting junior college transfer students, recruiting international young women, and developing support services for the returning adult female student. Includes 38 references. (Author/JDD)

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A STUDY OF DECLINING ENROLLMENT TRENDS IN WOMEN'S COLLEGES IN AMERICA, AND THE IMPACT ON BRENAU COLLEGE

Emergence of Higher Education in America

ED323863

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A Practicum presented to Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this practicum was to review the literature and research on the history, evolution and current status of women's colleges in the United States with a view to discovering a viable mission for women's colleges in the 1990's as well as potential new marketing and recruiting strategies to support their survival. Historians such as Thomas Woody and Frederick Rudolph were consulted and the research of Tidball, Sadker and Astin was reviewed with respect to the advantages of single-sex education. Numerous periodical and newspaper articles were reviewed to determine current trends among women's colleges nationwide. The findings were analyzed and applied to the prevailing state of affairs at Brenau College.

The results of the research suggested that while coeducation was often selected to assure economic survival, this choice generally negated the original purpose of single-sex education and obliterated the leadership and self-esteem building advantages of women's colleges. Further, those colleges that successfully remained single sex generally found a special market niche and aggressively marketed their women's college advantages.

As a result of this study eight specific recommendations were made regarding strategic marketing and

recruiting at Brenau to enhance the viability of the Women's College. A ninth recommendation suggested that the results of this study be shared broadly across the institution to include the Board of Trustees, the administrative staff and the Director of Admissions in order to increase the level of awareness of relevant research on women's colleges.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Brenau College is a private, four year liberal arts institution founded in 1878 and located in Gainesville, Georgia (Brenau Bulletin, 1988). The Women's College of Brenau consists primarily of residential students of traditional college age, that is eighteen to twenty-two years old. As with most institutions of higher education in the past decade, Brenau faces intense competition for a reduced applicant pool of traditional age students and more specifically shrinking numbers of young women interested in "women-only" institutions (Sites, 1988). Feeling the economic impact of reduced enrollments, more attention has been directed in recent years toward creative marketing plans, and new delivery systems targeted to the non traditional student populations to compensate for the lowered numbers of traditional age, residential females attending the institution.

The result has been two collegiate divisions existing and interacting side by side under the umbrella title of Brenau College. The Women's College enrolls approximately 500 students in daytime programming (8 AM to 4 PM), with about two-thirds of these being traditional aged residential students. The Professional College's

evening, weekend and off-campus programs now enroll nearly 1600 students.

The weight of these enrollment figures combined with demographic trends and economic pressures have resulted in frequent airing of the question of survival for the Women's College. With many other women's colleges closing or going coeducational, the feasibility of maintaining a single sex institution is often at issue.

The purpose of this study was to review the history and evolution of Women's Colleges in the United States in order to develop a perspective vis-a-vis the historical role and educational value of such institutions in American higher education. A review of research on the advantages of single sex education when compared to the coeducational format was also undertaken. It was postulated that such a historical and research review might suggest support for maintaining the women's college option despite the multiple pressures against its survival. Further the study analyzed recent trends among women's colleges with respect to closings or coeducational conversion with particular attention to the models for survival which remain. An analysis of various survivors was undertaken to glean ideas and guidance for Brenau College's strategic planning process, specifically recruiting and marketing options viable in the 1990's. The methodology used for this case study involved a review of literature on the history and evolution of women's colleges, a review of research on the

personal and instructional benefits to women of a single-sex college education, and a consideration of recent periodical and newspaper accounts of developments among women's colleges nationwide. These findings were analyzed in conjunction with a review of the current situation at Brenau College to discern applicable and viable options for the future of Brenau.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Despite creative efforts over the past two decades on the part of Brenau to prepare for and deal with both the predicted as well as unexpected demographic and economic changes in higher education, the Women's College in 1990 faces a shrinking applicant pool and lowered enrollment of traditional age residential young women for whom the college was historically designed. This dilemma is by no means unique to Brenau, nor even to women's colleges only, but rather has forced most small, private and often church - supported colleges in the United States to regroup and more carefully plan their future, even their survival (Women's College Coalition, 1987). The availability of reasonably priced coeducational institutions and the expressed preference for coeducation by the vast majority of high school graduating young women, however, places significantly more pressure on women's colleges to reconsider their mission and strategically plan for their future existence (Rice and Hemmings, 1988).

The historian Frederick Rudolph (1962: 310) indicates that the agitation for collegiate education of women was inspired by the progressiveness which prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century and the belief

in the fundamental rights of the individual in society. Though both coeducational as well as women's college opportunities became available following the Civil War, Frankfort (1977: 31) suggests that the female college was seen by many as "a place where women's convictions and intellect might be strengthened without the interference of hostile forces." Yet in the decades of the nineteen sixties and seventies, according to Rice and Hemmings (1988: 230), "more than half of all women's colleges in the United States became coeducational or closed their doors in response to financial pressures and women student's declining interest in single-sex education." An April 4, 1990 article in The Chronicle of Higher Education (Monaghan, 1990) describes one of the most recent debates on the issue of women's college survivability in modern American higher education. Mills College in Oakland California, facing tighter budgets each year and enrollment drops even with boosts in recruitment and financial aid, is strongly considering the financial advantage of going coeducational. Despite student, alumnae and administrative support for the concept of women's colleges, Monaghan (1990) states that "the onus is clearly on proponents of keeping men out to show how the college (Mills) can survive without them."

Ernest Boyer (1987: 3) maintains that "scrambling for students and driven by marketplace demands, many undergraduate colleges have lost their sense of mission."

This would appear to be particularly true in the case of many women's colleges whose initial pool of potentially interested students has been so diminished. Pressure to turn to coeducation just to survive has forced many former women's colleges to redefine their mission and abandon their original purpose. Despite the research by Tidball, the Sadkers, Astin and others emphasizing the distinct advantages in self-confidence, leadership development and long range academic achievement realized by graduates of women's colleges, nevertheless many have not been able to find their "niche" or market themselves sufficiently well enough to survive as single-sex institutions. At conversion schools (former women's colleges gone coed) such as Skidmore, studies subsequent to the conversion found traditional sexual lines, which were absent in the women's college environment, had been restored; that is, the distinct advantages of the single sex institution had been lost despite the college's verbal commitment to the principles of women's education ("Women's Colleges," 1987). Krupnick ("Academic Notes," 1990) in her studies at Wheaton College after its conversion to coeducation discovered similar results.

Brenau College has maintained its commitment to the concept of women's colleges and has steadfastly supported the continuation of a women-only daytime programming format. Coeducational evening programs begin at 4:00 PM and women's college students are allowed only limited

cross-enrollment to assure the benefits of the single-sex classroom environment. Nevertheless, applications have been down as have been paid commitments for the class entering fall of 1990 (Upchurch, 1990). The creative efforts made to date will have to be augmented to discover new marketing strategies to produce the necessary revenues for survival. This study was designed to uncover possible new tactics for Brenau's future as a Women's College.

This study related directly to the seminar on The Emergence of Higher Education in America as that seminar focused on the historical and philosophical roots of higher education in the United States with the goal of improving practice and our understanding of current problems and issues. As was stated in the Emergence syllabus (Bryant et. al., 1989: 1), such relfection on the past should lead to "speculation as to the future." This study was designed to contribute to sounder and more effective planning for the future of the Women's College of Brenau.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

The completion of this study required a literature review to discover the historical circumstances leading to the development of Women's Colleges in the United States. The review began with the role of women at the founding of the Colonial Colleges and followed the progress of their educational opportunities through to the present. Authors such as Frederick Rudolph (1962), Thomas Woody (1966), John Faragher and Florence Howe (1988), Barbara Solomon (1985) and Pearson, Shavlik and Touchton's Educating the Majority (1989) were consulted.

In addition recent literature and research comparing the coeducational learning environment with single-sex settings for women were reviewed to discover basic principles that might still support the survival of women's colleges in modern times. Authors such as Alexander Astin (1977), Hall and Sandler (1982), Ernest Boyer (1987), and Elizabeth Tidball (1989) were considered as were reports and publications of the Women's College Coalition.

Next a look was taken at the status of women's colleges in 1990. A sampling of women's colleges which have faced the demographic and economic pressures of the

past decade were reviewed via news clippings and press releases to glean an overview of the variety of responses and creative solutions which have emerged. Colleges which choose the coeducation route, ones that choose to remain women's colleges, and one that is currently in the decision process were reviewed to determine the major identifiable factors influencing their decisions and guiding their marketing and recruiting.

Finally the current situation at The Women's College of Brenau was outlined including a review of the development of the coeducational Professional College of Brenau. The unique characteristics of the college which seemed to lend themselves to the survival of the Women's College were identified as were those features which threaten the Women's College. The relationship and applicability of the findings of this study to Brenau College were analyzed.

An analysis of the history and research on women's colleges in the United States as well as a consideration of the implications from the several models which converted or have survived in the 1980's was made to determine which features and strategies of each case would be adaptable or applicable to Brenau. Recommendations were made for future marketing and strategy planning at the college.

For purposes of this study it was assumed that the term "women's college" includes any institution which began as an all-female institution and maintains as its primary

mission the education of women in a single-sex environment for at least a major part of the institution. Thus those colleges, including Brenau, which have developed coeducational evening programs in response to demographic and economic pressure are included in the study.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

In this chapter a review of relevant literature and research was undertaken to discover (a) the historical origins of women's colleges, (b) the advantages observed in the learning environment of women's colleges that might continue to support the mission of single-sex education for women, (c) the variety of responses by women's colleges to recent demographic and economic trends and (d) the status of Brenau College in this overall picture as well as the applicability of the findings to Brenau's future.

The Evolution of Women's Colleges

During the colonial period of America the traditional view that a women's place was in the home prevailed. Her faculties were not worth training, according to our forefathers, and therefore formal higher education was limited to elite young men in the English colonies (Rudolph, 1962: 308). Rudolph (1962: 307) cites Woody in concluding that "the colonial view of women was simply that she was intellectually inferior - incapable, merely by reason of being a woman, of great thoughts." With the American Revolution, however, "times would change" and many traditional beliefs and practices with them (Rudolph, 1962: 308).

In the last quarter of the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth centuries a rapid growth of the female seminary idea occurred, offering girls a more liberal education than they ever before received. Yet two things were necessary according to Woody (1929: 138) before "genuine women's colleges could be realized;" the new high schools and seminaries had to first provide more substantial preparation for women to ready them for advanced studies; and secondly, the supporters of college education for women needed to win financial backing and approval from influential people. "The attainment of these prerequisites required time" (Woody, 1929: 138). With varying effort and success a period of experimentation ensued. Important precedents were set with the founding of the female seminaries at Troy by Emma Willard in 1821, at Hartford in 1828 by Catherine Beecher and in South Hadley in 1836 by Mary Lyon. By 1850 there had been laid "a crucial foundation for women's higher education" (Solomon, 1985: 14).

Several factors contributed to the advancement of women's education during the first sixty years of the republic but Solomon (1985) suggests that most significant was the fact that women's education proved advantageous to society. Women's role as mother of male citizens was a powerful incentive to the education of those who must raise the citizens of the new nation. The renewed religious fervor of the period was a second impetus to women's

education in a society which valued highly the ideal of the Christian wife, mother and teacher (Solomon, 1985: 16). Indeed Patricia Sexton (1976: 46) states that "teaching became the legitimation for women's entry into higher education." Ultimately the agitation for collegiate education of women was inspired by the progressiveness which prevailed in the first half of the nineteenth century and the belief in the fundamental rights of the individual in society (Rudolph, 1962: 310).

The first experiment in women's collegiate education was the Georgia Female Seminary at Macon (later Wesleyan) chartered in 1836. However, as Barbara Solomon (1985: 24) points out, despite its name "this pioneer institution resembled a superior academy more than a male college, regularly admitting twelve-year-olds." In 1837 Oberlin College in Ohio opened its doors to women enrolling four female freshmen and thus inaugurating coeducational higher education for women. However, prior to the Civil War, less than six American colleges became coeducational and as Rudolph (1962: 311) indicates, "separate but theoretically equal institutions were somewhat more popular."

Catherine Beecher made an effort to give some direction and establish some standards for the women's college movement through the formation in 1852 of the American Women's Education Association. About a dozen largely local women's colleges were started in the 1850's;

but on the whole during the pre-Civil War period, the women's college movement failed to advance because of the same mental rigidity which blocked other educational reforms at the time. Furthermore, Rudolph (1962: 312) proposes that at this point in history "sending women off to college would continue to be looked upon as one of those notions, subversive to the American home and family, that were likely to be entertained only by the more reckless members of the community." In pre-Civil War America, educating women was alright up to a point, and that point was college!

Following the Civil War two specific agencies were responsible for the rapid extension of women's education. First were the land grant colleges, led by a successful demonstration of coeducation at Cornell. Second was the opening of high grade women's colleges in the East at Vassar (first announced in 1860) and at Smith and Wellesley in 1875. These women's colleges were patterned on the traditional college for men and their rigorous course of study soon elevated the standards and reputation of collegiate education for women (Rudolph, 1962: 314). Indeed, given the hostility to higher education for women still perceived among many academic men in some coeducational settings, the female college was seen by many as "a place where women's convictions and intellect might be strengthened without the interference of hostile forces" (Frankfort, 1977: 31). In 1888 Bryn Mawr opened and Mount

Holyoke evolved from the Seminary at South Hadley. Trinity College in Washington became the first Catholic college for women in 1900. In the South, older women's seminaries like Mary Baldwin in Virginia, Judson in Alabama and Agnes Scott in Georgia became rigorous colleges. Solomon (1985: 49) cites R. Clark Seelye to capture the common ideal of women's colleges in the 1890's: "The college is not intended to fit woman for any particular sphere or profession but to develop by the most carefully devised means all her intellectual capacities, so that she may be a more perfect woman in any position."

The development of women's colleges did not stop the progress of coeducational institutions, however. Indeed, neither the women's colleges nor the compromise coordinate colleges such as Radcliffe (Harvard's annex founded in 1893) would become the rule for women's collegiate education in America. "While both of these movements would establish the right of women to higher education . . . yet the characteristic institution for the higher education of women in the United States would be the coeducational college or the coeducational university (Rudolph, 1962: 320). Table I (Solomon, 1985: 44) shows the distribution of women's colleges within the framework of American higher education from 1870 to 1981 and makes clear that the women's college peaked in influence, relatively speaking, at the turn of the century.

TABLE 1

Colleges Open to Men and Women 1870-1981

Year	Number of institutions	% Men only	% Women only	% Coeducational
1870	582	59	12	29
1890	1082	37	20	43
1910	1083	27	15	58
1930	1322	15	16	69
1957	1326	13	13	74
1976	1849	4	5	91
1981	1928	3	5	92

Of course the numbers of women enrolled in higher education from 1870-1980 increased from 11,000 or 21 percent of all students enrolled in 1870 to 51.8 percent of total enrollment, or 5,694,000 women in 1980. Table 2 (Solomon, 1985: 63) illustrates these trends.

TABLE 2

Women Enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education, 1870-1980

Year	Number of women enrolled (thousand)	Percentage of all students enrolled
1870	11	21.0
1880	40	33.4
1890	56	35.9
1900	85	36.8
1910	140	39.6
1920	283	47.3
1930	481	43.7
1940	601	40.2
1950	806	30.2
1960	1,223	37.9
1970	2,884	41.9
1975	3,847	45.4
1980	5,694	51.8

The ever increasing numbers of women in higher education over the years allowed for the growth and survival of women's colleges in the first half of the twentieth century despite the enrollment dominance of the coeducational institutions.

But in the decades of the sixties and seventies "more than half of all women's colleges in the United States became coeducational or closed their doors in response to financial pressures and women student's declining interest in single-sex education" (Rice and Hemmings, 1988: 230). Of nearly 300 women's colleges existing in the heyday of the early sixties, only 94 remain in 1990. All but three men's colleges in America have opened their doors to women, and consequently the role of the women's college in higher education has been increasingly questioned.

The Learning Environment for Women

The passage of Title IX of the Education Amendment in 1972 gave added impetus to coeducation for both private and public colleges by prohibiting sex discrimination in federally assisted education programs and activities. However, findings of the Project on the Status and Education of Women of the Association of American Colleges as well as Brown University studies in 1980, Alexander Astin's Four Critical Years (1977), and studies by the Women's College Coalition have raised many questions as to

the true equality of educational opportunity enjoyed by women students on coeducational campuses. A review of those studies follows.

Working with institutions, government agencies and other programs related to women in education, The Project on the Status and Education of Women was created in 1972 to provide information concerning women students, faculty and administrators. A project publication entitled The Classroom Climate: A Chilly One for Women? (Hall and Sandler, 1982) compiled findings from a variety of studies clearly identifying sexist behaviors in coeducational college classrooms. Women's educational experiences, the study suggests, "may differ considerably from those of men, even when they attend the same institutions, share the same classrooms, and work with the same graduate advisors" (Sandler and Hall, 1982). In his extensive longitudinal study of student development Astin (1978: 216) concluded

> even though men and women are presumably exposed to a common liberal arts curriculum and other educational programs during the undergraduate years, it would seem that these programs serve more to to preserve, rather than to reduce, stereotypic differences between men and women in behavior, personality, aspirations and achievement.

Studies of classroom behavior cited by Sandler and Hall (1982) consistently show that women students receive less eye contact during lectures, less attention when they talk, their work is taken less seriously, and they are interrupted more often by fellow students and faculty members. "Subtle and inadvertent differences in the ways

faculty treat men and women students can dampen women's participation and lead them to doubt the value of their contributions," say Hall and Sandler (1982). Ernest Boyer (1987: 150) supports this perspective suggesting that

> in many classrooms women are overshadowed. Even the brightest women students often remain silent. They may submit excellent written work, and will frequently wait until after class to approach a teacher privately about issues raised in the discussion. But it is the men who seem most often to be recognized and talk most in class. Not only do men talk more, but what they say often carries more weight. This pattern of classroom leaders and followers is set very early in the term.

Studies suggest it seems to be taken for granted by many faculty and students that men will usually dominate discussion in college classrooms, and research confirms women students are less likely to be verbally aggressive in coeducational settings (Hall and Sandler, 1982).

American University's Myra and David Sadker have studied all levels of classroom interactions for over a decade. They suggest sex stereotypes begin in grade school where teachers (male or female) interact more with boys, calling on them more and giving them more positive as well as more precise feedback. "How we treat boys and girls obviously affects the way they learn and what they learn," says Dr. Myra Sadker (Keegan, 1989). Dr. Barbara Kerr of the University of Iowa, author of Smart Girls, Gifted Women, suggests teachers are making greater efforts to overcome sexism but too often are not even aware of this differential treatment (Conroy, 1988).

One of the most recent studies of male domination in coed classrooms was undertaken by Catherine Krupnick, a faculty member of Harvard ("Academic Notes," 1990). In videotaped classes in 1985 she discovered Harvard men talked up to twelve times as much as Harvard women. Participation was equal only in classes taught by women where women outnumbered men. Krupnick is currently examining videos of first year students at Wheaton College, a women's college turned coed in 1988. Her findings report male students dominate classroom conversation at Wheaton despite their smaller numbers ("Academic Notes," 1990).

Linda Witt of the Gannett New Service, in a review of research studies such as those cited above, commented in the Florida Today: "Women may earn a degree at a coed institution, but they also graduate with substantially diminished expectations of themselves; . . . a coed performs well against male students but her ego takes a beating" (Witt, 1988). One clue as to why, suggests Witt, is in the archaic word "coed." "No matter how you define it, it implies a second class citizen. Men are simply called students" (Witt, 1988). The report of the Association of American Colleges on The Classroom Climate (1982: 2) concludes similarly:

> despite women's gains in access to higher education -- especially since the passage of Title IX--these patterns, by which women students are (overtly - or, more often, inadvertently) either singled out or ignored because of their sex, may leave women students feeling less confident than their

> male classmates about their abilities and their place in the college community. . .

In contrast to these rather negative findings on the status of women in coeducational institutions, research on learning and growth in single sex colleges according to Astin (1978: 246) shows "a pattern of effects that is almost uniformly positive." In his analysis of college environments Astin (1978: 246) found that in single sex colleges, students "become more academically involved, interact with faculty frequently, show large increases in intellectual self-esteem, and are more satisfied with practically all aspects of the college experience compared with their counterparts in coeducational institutions." According to Astin (1978: 246) "women's colleges increase the chances that women will obtain positions of leadership, complete the baccalaureate degree, and aspire to higher degrees."

Research by the Women's College Coalition, founded in 1972 to make the case for all-female institutions of higher learning, finds that, compared to graduates of coed schools, alumnae of women's colleges are:

- six times more likely to be on the boards of Fortune 500 companies;
- seven times more likely to be named as one of Good Housekeeping's outstanding women graduates;
- two times more likely to pursue doctoral degrees;
- six times more likely to be on Business Week's list of top corporate women.

Of twenty-seven women in Congress twelve, or forty-four percent, attended women's colleges. Dr. Myra Sadker

concludes that "when girls go to single-sex schools, they stop being the audience and become players" (Conroy: 1989).

Dr. Elizabeth Tidball, a leading researcher in the field of women's education and a professor of physiology at George Washington Medical Center, has discovered that "despite the fact women's colleges graduates make up a small percentage of the total number of women graduates, fifty percent of women listed in Who's Who Among American Women were women's college graduates" (Parker, 1987). In her essay entitled "Women's Colleges: Exceptional Conditions, Not Exceptional Talent, Produce High Achievers" (Tidball, 1989) Dr. Tidball argues that women's colleges are a valuable national resource as institutional models for the education and employment of women. What they have in common is the education of women as their first priority. How they accomplish their goals, suggests Tidball, depends upon their individual governance style, location, financial resources, size and particular history.

Tidball's research began in 1970 and has consistently led her to conclude that the environment of women's colleges is more enabling of women than is that of coeducational institutions. "There is no way to dismiss the productivity of women's colleges," states Tidball (1989: 161) "nor to imagine that somehow the vast majority of bright women and potential achievers have for decades only chosen to attend women's colleges, most of which are highly regional, small in size, and not especially

selective in admissions." Tidball's (1989) own work examined alongside that of Gilligan and Miller has suggested that women's college students are freer to excell in academic work as well as to test their interest and skill in leadership without fear of concomitant loss of femininity as judged by their peers.

In her 1973, 1974 and 1980 studies Dr. Tidball (1989) found graduates of women's colleges were twice as likely to be career achievers as compared to women graduates of coeducational institutions when comparability of institutions was held constant. That is to say that less selective women's colleges were more productive than less selective coeducational schools. In studies with Macoby and Jaclin, Dr. Tidball reported the development of talented young women into achieving adults was directly proportional to the number of female role models to whom they had access (Tidball, 1989). The same study with Macoby and Jacklin found a negative correlation between numbers of women achievers and the proportion of men students on campus, though Tidball also found male faculty at Women's Colleges were more concerned with women-related issues and thus were more nurturing. At women's colleges the proportion of women faculty averages about fifty percent compared to thirty-six percent at women's change schools, twenty-three percent at traditional coed schools and sixteen percent at men's change schools (Tidball, 1989: 168).

The Response of Women's Colleges in the Eighties

In 1990 only ninety-four women's colleges remain in the United States, two thirds less than the 298 existing in 1960. These ninety-four colleges educate about two percent of women who attend college in the United States. A recent article in the Atlanta Constitution (February 22, 1990) suggests the pressure is on many women's colleges to choose between survival and coeducation in an era of virtually unlimited higher education opportunities for women and shrinking numbers of traditional college-age students. Significantly, however, most of the women's colleges today, as well as those which have closed or merged, are small, private liberal arts institutions, precisely the category which has been struggling for survival in the coeducational realm as well. The mergers and closings of women's colleges that started in the 1960's were not unlike similar occurrences among small, church - related and rural coeducational and men's colleges. The Women's College Coalition (1990) points out that the 1970's was a decade of great growth for those women's colleges that choose to remain all-women, with overall enrollments rising by twenty-five percent. Since the mid 1980's, women's college conversions to coeducation have slowed to an average of one or two per year. According to Rice

(1988), this seems to suggest a renaissance and stabilization of existing women's colleges. The survival of Women's Colleges in America appears to have been buttressed by the "resolve of leaders at women's college to provide a single-sex sanctuary for women in higher education." (Rice, 1988: 223).

Bryn Mawr President Mary Patterson McPherson states her belief in a recent Time (Bower, 1987) article that women's colleges play an important role by contributing to a pluralistic approach to education. Nicole Reindorf, associate director of the Women's College Coalition, suggests that going coed makes former women's colleges into just one more "non-name-brand liberal arts college" (Bower, 1987) and such schools trade off their niche in the market. Like many other educational leaders, McPherson and Wellesley's President Nannerl Keohane are far from convinced that the women's movement has removed the prejudices that gave rise to women's colleges in the first place. Kiohance states in the Time article (Bower, 1987) that perhaps the day of equality will come, and the women's college mission will be accomplished, but she doesn't see it happening soon. Until then, she goes on, women at women's colleges not only enjoy "equal opportunity, but every opportunity" (Bower, 1987: 75).

However, not all women's colleges remaining in the eighties have succeeded in finding their niche, creatively adapting to the market, and sticking successfully with

their original stated mission. Even if women's college supporters recognize what the research makes clear: that an all-women's institution often provides the strongest and most competitive preparation for achievement in the larger coeducational world; nevertheless, supporters realize the painful truth that neither most college-bound girls nor their parents readily understand the research. Thus Marymount in Virginia, Queen's College in Charlotte, North Carolina, Wheaton in Massachusetts and Goucher in Maryland are among the conversions to coeducation prompted by demographics and economics in the past few years. Russell Sage in New York considered coeducation last year and Wilson College's trustees in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania voted to close the institution several years ago. Both of these institutions, however, after careful research, finally elected to remain women's colleges. The debate is currently raging at two more women's colleges, Mills in Oakland, California and Chatham in Pennsylvania, with both expected to make decisions imminently. A brief review of the different circumstances surrounding the Queens, Goucher, and Wheaton conversions, compared to the Sage and Wilson decisions, as well as a look at what other women's colleges are currently doing to survive might shed some light on the best direction for a women's college like Brenau in an era of changing demographics and stiff competition.

Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina had been a Presbyterian college for women for 130 years when in 1987 the Board of Trustees announced plans to admit men as residential students in 1988. The college officials cited "plans to strengthen the academic program, upgrade academic standards, increase enrollment and boost faculty salaries" (Kelley, 1987) as the significant incentives for the change. Queens' president Wireman cited the fact that only two percent of college-bound senior women want to attend a women's college and only ten percent would consider one (Kelley, 1987). He also referred to the "convent image" of women's colleges. Wiremen anticipated adding to the rolls not only men but more women who would not have considered Queens as a strictly women's college. The Queens decision to go coed came at a time of balanced budget and followed a successful adjustment to declining enrollment in the 1970's. In 1979 evening and weekend continuing education programs for working adults were added and the liberal arts college found its niche by adding a computer training center in 1984. Queens graduated the largest class in its women's college history in 1987, its last year as a women's college (Kelley, 1987).

Goucher College in Maryland and Wheaton College in Massachusetts both chose the coed solution in 1986 and 1987. The demise of all-male bastions like Dartmouth and Amherst combined with the shrinking and already small pool of women interested in single-sex institutions were cited

as significant to schools like Wheaton and Goucher which are a notch below the "grandes dames" like Wellesley and Smith. Despite relentless recruiting efforts, Wheaton's enrollment barely had held steady in the 1980's. Wheaton was further inspired to coeducation by Goucher's example: applications in the first year of coeducation were up sixty-six percent with twelve percent of them from men (Salholz, 1987). Furthermore Wheaton officials cited marketing studies which have shown that many seniors turn down a first-rate single-sex school in favor of a second-rate coed college.

Wilson College in Chambersburg Pennsylvania was a tiny liberal arts college for women ordered to close by its own Board of Trustees in 1979. Enrollment had declined from 722 to 236 and half the ten million dollar endowment had been used to keep up day-to-day operations. But the alumnae prepared a lawsuit and got a court order to remain open. Today Wilson's full time enrollment is 176 with over 600 additional part-time students enrolled in evening classes. Annual giving, as a result of aggressive fund raising, has increased to one million dollars and a $1.1 million physical-plant endowment has been created (Nicklin, 1990). A major overhaul of the college curriculum reduced the number of programs from 22 to 13 while adding new, more popular majors like business administration. A division of continuing studies was created, awarding associate degrees to both men and women in such disciplines

as accounting and business communications. Some alumnae have been critical of the new coeducational community college aspect of Wilson, but the evening program boasts a seventy-five percent female enrollment and a continued commitment on the part of the school to women's education. Students interviewed (Nicklin, 1990) cite the concentration on academics, small size, supportive faculty, decreased pressure on appearance without men, leadership opportunities and numerous female role models as their principal reasons for high satisfaction with their school.

Russell Sage College in Troy, New York, considered coeducation in 1987 but following a fifteen-month study of other colleges that had taken that route, Sage administrators decided "not to tamper with seventy-one years of tradition" (Bowen, 1987: 76). Instead, according to Bowen (1987), Russell Sage has become one of the most aggressive and innovative recruiters of female applicants. All freshmen are assigned a "big sister," a faculty mentor, and a student advisor. "Old girl networks" are created with graduates to nurture career opportunities and seniors are put in touch with such alumnae for advice and to arrange job contacts (Bowen, 1987). In addition, Russell Sage has a special market niche. Alongside the standard liberal arts curriculum, Sage provides "training for traditional women's professions such as nursing and physical therapy as well as newer fields such as public

administration, business and accounting. ("Women's Colleges," 1987).

Facing rapidly increasing expenses, rising tuition ($17,000 last year), challenging demographics, fluctuating enrollments, deferred maintenance of facilities and a shrinking pool of qualified students from which to recruit, Mills college, a 137 year old liberal arts college for women in Oakland California is currently reassessing its mission and considering, among other options, coeducation (Curtis, 1990). One major factor impinging on Mills and all private colleges in the state is the excellent and inexpensive state system of higher education in California. In its strategic plan Mills has established a 1995 enrollment goal of 1000 undergraduates to produce the tuition base needed to support the quality and range of existing programs and to fully utilize and maintain the campus and buildings. Currently 777 undergraduates are enrolled. Despite being one of the top 150 best-endowed colleges in the United States, expenses have been growing slightly faster than revenues and a larger student body is needed to operate efficiently. President Mary Metz (1990) in a letter to other Women's College Coalition presidents said the two major options being considered by Mills are: (a) growing as a women's college or (b) admitting men in order to grow. Option "a" might involve the addition of weekend and evening classes for part-timers as well as recruitment of older women. Other possibilities are to

revamp the curriculum and to recruit female transfer students from two- year colleges. President Metz (1990) stated that the administration believes in the Mill's mission as a liberal arts college for women but the question is whether Mills can compete as a single-sex institution. An April 4, 1990 Chronicle of Higher Education article (Monagham) indicates that Mills officials are examining the results at other women's colleges which chose to admit men. Studies show Connecticut, Goucher, Skidmore, Vassar and Wheaton all increased their enrollments, buoyed themselves financially, improved their rates of student retention and experienced no long run negative impact on fund raising. Mills is expected to make a decision in May, 1990.

A variety of tactics have been used by other women's colleges to compete and survive as they enter the decade of the 90's. Some of the richer academies, says the Economist (1987), offer generous financial aid; others offer academic exchanges with men's colleges. Continuing education for older women (the one growth area in the market) is a popular option. Mount Holyoke asks parents of undergrads to contact parents of potential applicants (Salholz, 1987). With the support of the Women's College Coalition, many coalition members are stressing their unique identity, their commitment to women's education and their success in training women for careers as among their major selling points (Goode, 1988). A large number of

women's colleges promise their applicants the "best of both worlds" through cross registration or dual degree programs with nearby coed schools (bowen, 1987). Barnard's participation with Columbia University is a case in point. At Texas Women's University, a residence hall for single mothers has been created, including a playground and low-cost after-school care (Manhan, 1990). Nearly all women's colleges today are adapting their services to the growing needs of women today, especially training in newer, less traditional fields such as business administration. Career services and internships have been other attractive programs added at many women's colleges. It is true, says Stephen Goode (1988), that the number of women's colleges has declined sharply. "Even so, the survivors seem to have mastered the fine art of aggressive marketing that emphasizes the practical advantages of their kind of education" (Goode, 1988).

Brenau: The Women's College

Brenau College, a member of the Women's College Coalitions as well as the Southern Association of Colleges for Women is strongly committed to the concept of women's colleges and the leadership opportunities they represent for young women. Brenau's enrollments have approximated fairly closely national trends through the years, including drops in the late sixties and early seventies. But the choice of coeducation, elected by many other all-female

institutions in that period of crisis, was not chosen by Brenau. Instead in 1969 the institution created a separate coeducational evening division of the college, maximizing use of the existing physical plant and faculty, generating new income, meeting a demand in the community and maintaining the Women's College intact. Eventually named the Professional College of Brenau, the evening program has grown steadily from an on-campus enrollment of 17 in 1969 to include more than a dozen off campus locations, two master's degree programs and an active Weekend College, with a total enrollment in January of 1989 of 1,536 students, of which forty-three percent were male. The Professional College tuition generated 32.7 percent of total revenues for Brenau in 1988-89 as compared to 37 percent generated by Women's College residential student tuition (Childers, 1989). Women's College residential enrollment, however, was only 316 students. The Professional College has clearly enhanced survival of the Women's College through the crisis of the sixties and seventies, and will likely continue to assist in that way as declining enrollments of the 1980's plunge to all-time lows in the next five years (WICHE, 1988: 7).

However, it is important to recognize that despite the expanded definition of Brenau's mission with the growth of the Professional College in non-traditional markets (Brenau, 1981: xii) the Women's College remains the traditional and public image of Brenau. In Surviving the

Eighties, Mayhew (1979: 148) emphasizes that strong collegiate institutions generally maintain "a remarkably stable image" and not so strong but viable institutions "retain a long-term consistency of purpose." Weaker institutions, says Mayhew, (1979: 148) better make their stands on what they have been." The Women's College at Brenau offers a stable image and a consistency of purpose while simultaneously representing a cultural center for the larger Gainesville community. This historical image and purpose could not be served by The Professional College alone. Alumnae and community support of The Women's College of Brenau through the annual fund represents a meaningful portion of yearly revenues, specifically 6.6 percent in 1988-89 (Childers, 1989). Combined with Women's College residential tuition (37 percent) and day student tuition (7.3 percent), the revenues attributable to the Women's College, despite relatively low enrollment, amounts to about 51 percent of total revenues. Therefore shoring up the Women's College, maintaining a stable, viable image and a consistency of traditional purpose, would appear to be critical to the overall and long-term survival of the institution as a whole and indeed is the expressed intention of the college president and Board of Trustees. Yet the severely declining enrollments of the late 1980's and those projected nationwide for the 1990's in reports like that of WICHE, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (1988), do not bode well for less elite,

less competitive women's colleges like Brenau that will be competing with the Ivy League colleges in its own backyard. Clearly the Women's College must at least maintain current enrollments to survive and a review of recent trends among other women's colleges might reasonably be expected to suggest viable options for Brenau's future and her strategic planning.

As a result of this research the factors that appear to be influencing the current direction of women's colleges are summarized as follows:

1. Shrinking pool of traditional age students.
2. Even smaller pool of females
3. Negative images of women's colleges
4. Stated preference of most college-bound high school females to attend a coeducational institution
5. Importance to women's college survival of a coordinate or neighboring male or coed institution (Barnard/Colombia example)
6. Growing returning adult female market and returning adults in general
7. Competition between high tuition privates and less expensive state coed options
8. Rising costs in general
9. Less federal aid
10. The importance of finding a market niche
11. Most conversion decisions are ultimately economically driven despite the research (learning environment factors) relative to women's intellectual self esteem growth, leadership development, and the advantage of more female role models and mentors at women's colleges.
12. The Women's Colleges that survive seem to have a clear sense of their own mission.
13. Each case is unique - politically geographically, economically, philosophically.
14. As fewer Women's Colleges exist, those able to "get out the message" and recruit women vigorously may have a good chance to thrive.
15. Playing up women graduates' success is one important approach.

16. Parents and alumnae need to be educated as to the progressiveness of women's colleges.

In analyzing these factors and applying them to Brenau's situation it becomes clear that staying in the women - only market will be doubly challenging to Brenau for a variety of reasons. The lack of a coordinate or coeducational institution in the immediate vicinity such as is enjoyed by the vast majority of surviving women's colleges makes it hard to combat the negative image of women's colleges. The stated preference of most high school girls to attend a coed college is especially difficult to counter under these circumstances.

Rising costs for a tuition-driven private institution located within an hour of numerous coeducational state-supported institutions represents an additional negative for Brenau, particularly since Brenau draws heavily from the same local Georgia market. Convincing parents and students of the greater value to be realized at Brenau is necessary but lack of either a sizeable endowment or extensive financial aid options tends to exaccerbate the problem.

The growing population of adults returning to college has been addressed by Brenau with the opening of the coeducational Professional College evening and weekend programs in the seventies and eighties. However, the possibility of enhancing the adult female daytime population in the women's college would seem to deserve

greater attention. If properly recruited, this population might be expected to respond to and be particularly well suited to the nurturing environment and female role models of a women's college.

The importance of finding a market niche has been repeatedly emphasized in the literature reviewed and is as equally applicable to private coeducational colleges as private women's colleges. Decisions by women's colleges to convert to coeducation, therefore, cannot be expected to necessarily solve enrollment problems. If the greatest attraction of Brenau's daytime program, to either parents or students, is the uniqueness of being single-sex, then converting to coeducational status lacking other market research to support such a change would be counterproductive. A clear sense of her mission as a women's college combined with vigorous recruitment which emphasizes the distinct advantages of single-sex education, including emphasis on successful graduates, could reasonably be expected to be more effective than coed conversion. Exploration of the significance and market in any other "program" niches, existing or developable, would be required to support the economic value of conversion to coeducation at this point, especially given the variety of less expensive coeducational opportunities in close proximity to Brenau.

The "education" of parents and alumnae relative to the progressiveness of modern women's colleges would appear

to be a worthwhile effort to undertake in view of the significant influence both these populations can have on the college-going decisions of high school graduates. The research supports the positive effects of single-sex education in improving self-esteem and capacity to compete, but most parents are unaware of the research and most alumnae attended Brenau in an era of less professional orientation for the college. Both could benefit from a fresh, updated perspective which the college could provide.

In summary, serious market research to suggest the viability of coeducation would seem to be necessary before Brenau chooses that route to combat current enrollment difficulties in the Women's College. Those who have chosen coeducation and done well seem to have done their research and determined a market existed within which they could compete. Lacking that support, it would appear in Brenau's best interest to build upon the strength of her historic tradition and the uniqueness of women's colleges today, upon the support of her alumnae and her graduate's successes, and upon the adult female market growth. Drawing from the example of other creative women's colleges, Brenau might also explore articulation agreements with junior colleges, and aggressively recruit minority and international women. Critical to success in this endeavor would seem to be her clear understanding and communication of her mission as a women's college.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A review of the historical literature revealed that Women's Colleges in America emerged in response to a need for women's education. Almost simultaneously, however, the coeducational college and university offered women the same long-denied opportunity to seek a higher education. The two styles developed side by side (though dominated by coeducation) until the popularity of single-sex institutions declined measurably in the 1960's. Many women's colleges simply closed while others attempted coeducation as a survival technique, or explored drastically different programming. During this period Brenau College resisted the coeducation option determining that her mission, her history and tradition, and her strength and uniqueness all were tied to her identity as a women's college. As Mayhew (1979: 151) stated, being true to a college's historical identity is frequently the key to survival, and so to date it appears to be with Brenau. The unique solution initiated with the offering of coeducational evening classes in 1969 has allowed the institution to weather the storms of lowered residential enrollments and continues to do so with expanded formats and steadily growing enrollment of the Professional and

Weekend Colleges of Brenau today. This solution has been used by a number of women's colleges such as Wilson and explored by others such as Mills when faced with economic pressures. However, the continued success of the Professional College of Brenau would appear to be dependent upon the continued viability of Women's College, the standard bearer and the public image of the overall institution. To the Gainesville community, Brenau is primarily the Women's College. Furthermore, alumnae support to the Women's College represents about six percent of total institutional revenues. These factors alone make it critical to focus upon the lowered enrollment in the Women's College and determine recruitment strategies to help maintain if not increase overall enrollment during the next five particularly critical years of projected all time low traditional student enrollments (WICHE, 1988).

The findings from the research on the advantages of the nurturing faculty and female role models in the single-sex classroom with respect to growth in self-esteem as well as both intellectual and leadership development bodes well for Brenau College. This would appear to be a strong selling point as emphasized by the Womens College Coalition especially for an institution which is relatively open door but can claim graduates who have attained medical and law school acceptance, opened numerous successful businesses and gone on to a number of significant leadership positions. Such data on Brenau graduates should be more

systematically compiled and used, along with testimonials possibly, in recruiting young women in the future, and thereby convincing them of the validity of the mission of women's colleges today. Research shows that today's high school graduates are primarily concerned with jobs after graduation, not liberal arts ideals. They must be attracted to attend a women's college on their own terms and based on their own concerns. Properly (perhaps even agressively) presented, the facts on women's college programming and successes and especially Brenau women's successes should be a drawing card.

A consideration of the various responses of women's colleges nationally to the demographic and economic realities of the 1990's has a number of implications for Brenau. Exploration of the coeducational market is always a possibility, but the Russell Sage experience suggests careful research may recommend against the option. Indeed the uniqueness of the women's college is a "niche" which the literature implies is a major element in the survival of any small private college today. Russell Sage's "old girl networks" would seem to be the type of support of current enrollees by alumnae that could be successfully implemented at Brenau to help boost retention. A related tactic borrowed from the Mount Holyoke model would be to extend the network in the opposite direction, making better use of undergraduate's parents to recruit more young women to the college. The literature suggests the strong

influence parents have on the college going decision; Brenau could benefit by capitalizing on that point and taking advantage of the strong parental support she generally enjoys.

Like Russell Sage, Brenau has already revised programming to include, alongside the liberal arts core, professional training for women in traditional fields like nursing and teaching as well as newer ones like business and accounting. Continued marketing research on potential programming directions which would blend with the school's mission and facilities and be attractive to potential students is still advisable. Some complimentary areas might be discovered as well which lend themselves to Associate Degree programs such as Wilson College offers. Clearly these latter would have to be in areas supported by current staffing and programming and not in competition with the local public junior college or technical school.

The recruitment of female transfers from junior colleges, a consideration in the Mills case, is another excellent potential market for Brenau. The transfer-of-credit policies are already in place and Brenau's caring, nurturing faculty might reasonably be expected to appeal to many junior college women. This market has not been a major focus of Brenau's Admissions Office and recruiting staff in the past and would seem to merit further investigation.

Evidence gathered from the survival strategies of other colleges would also suggest that older women (over 25) could potentially be viable contributors to the survival of the Women's College of Brenau in the 1990's. Significant numbers of adult women over the age of 25 in the Women's College are a fairly recent phenomenon, reflective however of the national pattern. The College Board's OALS-Office of Adult Learning Services (College Board News, 1988) reports that adult enrollment in American higher education has grown steadily from 1970 with adults now representing 45 percent of total enrollments and expected to reach 50 percent by the 1990's. The OALS (College Board News, 1988) further identifies 60 percent of the returning adult population as female, and 50 percent as daytime students. Brenau's adult daytime population reached a peak of around 50 students at one point in the 1988-89 school year representing over ten percent of total women's college enrollment. Adult students represented a wide variety of majors with traditional women's occupations of nursing and education, however, carrying the greater numbers. As the College Board's Office of Adult Learning Services (College Board New, 1988) points out, the adult college going population will be increasing as the number of high school graduates shrinks 12 percent over the next five years, making this market an important one to focus on and service in the 1990's. If actively recruited and sufficiently supported by campus sevices this non-

traditional source of students for the Women's College could be a tremendous support to the mission and financial stability of the college.

A second source of non-traditional students that could potentially provide increased enrollments for the Women's College of Brenau would be the foreign student population. In 1987 some 350,000 international students were studying in American institutions of higher education (Kalivoda, 1988). A small private residential college for women in a safe protective environment could potentially appeal to the parents of many young ladies abroad, particularly in those countries strongly stressing the protection of their young women. The personal attention which is possible in a school like Brenau and the hallmark of women's college learning environments, as opposed to the "factory" image of large state universitites, could be a very positive factor. Futhermore, Brenau's policy of accepting international students in need of some English as a Second Language study prior to full regular matriculation allows the student from abroad to begin integrating into the college while still acquiring and perfecting her language skills. Opportunities to experience homestays have been arranged in the past, likewise enhancing the appeal of Brenau. Most importantly, female international students of traditional age fit perfectly into the mission and purpose of Brenau to educate young women as well as to encourage "an understanding and appreciation the diverse

cultures within and without the western world" (Brenau Bulletin, 1988: 7). As full-paying residential students, international students could ease the financial burden of decreased enrollments of traditional age American students anticipated over the next decade.

The implications of this research for the Women's College of Brenau logically lead to the following recommendations:

1. that Brenau systematically compile data on graduates and emphasize graduate successes in her recruiting;

2. that Brenau work to continually update and capitilize on her alumnae network to support and interact with current undergraduates to help maximize the chances of retention;

3. that alumnae be urged to help seniors with the job search and that these connections be advertised to potential applicants and their parents;

4. that satisfied and aware parents of undergraduates be involved systematically in the recruiting process and to help "educate" prospective parents and students as to the progessiveness of women's colleges;

5. that investigation be ongoing and college-wide regarding "up to date" programming adaptations which fit the college's mission and are appealing to the current generation of high school graduates;

6. that direct recruitment of junior college transfers be enhanced;

7. that reasonable support services be developed and agressive recruitment of the returning adult (over 25) female student be undertaken;

8. that international young women be actively recruited;

9. that this study be shared with the Board of Trustees, the administrative staff and particularly the Director of Admissions to suggest possible new directions for Brenau's strategic planning process and recruiting.

The results of this study could have broad applicability to other small private women's colleges struggling for survival. The recommendations, however, are generally limited to the situation of Brenau College, its geographic location and its specific stage of evolution as a women's college.

The implementation of recommendation one, two and three would overlap three areas of the Brenau campus: the Office of Student Development, the Alumnae Affairs Office, and the Admissions Office. As a part of the Southern Association accrediation guidelines on institutional effectiveness, the Student Development Office will be distributing surveys to graduates on a regular basis to determine their satisfaction with their education in preparing them for careers. The results of such surveys combined with the data already being compiled by Alumnae Affairs would provide valuable information for use in recruiting by the Office of Admissions.

Recommendations two and three would involve the efforts of the Brenau Alumnae Affairs Office and the Office of Student Development, particularly its subdivisions, the ACT I Freshman Orientation program and the Career Planning and Placement Office. A student-alumnae matching program held in conjunction with the freshman program as well as

one or more senior-alumnae career planning seminars or activities would require the coordination of both offices, and the results would require publication and promotion in admissions recruitment literature. Such activities could also help assure that alumnae are regularly updated on progressive happenings and programming at the college. Implementation of Recommendation four would fall primarily to the Admissions Office and could best be realized via the development of a Parents Recruiting Team approach. Regional admissions staff activities would involve those local parents to serve, entertain, speak and generally recruit.

Recommendation five would fall in the domain of the academic administration and faculty to implement. Faculty should be urged to remain current vis a vis developments in their own and related fields and to be particularly sensitive to technological change affecting related careers and therefore student needs. "Cutting edge" thinking should be encouraged and rewarded.

Recruitment strategies to encourage junior college transfers (Recommendation six) would simply need to become part of the Brenau Admissions Office's overall strategy. Recommendation seven likewise would be coordinated primarily out of the Admissions Office with support services from the Office of Student Development in the way of activities, clubs, career planning and counseling. Recommendation eight is currently being implemented (since

the proposal stage of this investigation) through the newly created International Education Office and its full time director. It will be important that the efforts of the new office be harmoniously coordinated with those of the Admissions Office.

Finally recommendation nine will be undertaken by the author in order to promote increased and broader institutional understanding of the historical origins, evolution, and current status of a wide range of women's colleges across the nation. Such new or renewed understanding and awareness among a wide range of individuals who are open-minded and supportive of women's colleges should encourage even more creative and positive thinking regarding possible marketing and recruiting strategies which will enhance the future of Brenau.

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